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INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0049  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 0559  
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0190  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1674  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8599  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1240  
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 5982  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2255  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 1842  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0060  
RUEHMRE/AMCONSUL MARSEILLE 1680

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000992

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TAGS: PHUM PREL PREF SMIG AG

SUBJECT: JUST PASSING THROUGH? NIGERIA, ALGERIA AND  
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

REF: ALGIERS 931

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Thomas F. Daughton;  
reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: A Nigerian diplomat in Algiers confirms that Nigerians are being trafficked through Algeria, with Europe their expected final destination. The diplomat says that traffickers in Nigeria convince fellow citizens to make the journey, luring them with promises of a brighter future in Europe. He also says that individuals willingly pay thousands of euros to be trafficked, with Tamanrasset the main port of entry to Algeria. Ninety percent of the Nigerians in Algeria are illegal immigrants, according to the diplomat. END SUMMARY.

TRANSIT VISA NOT NEEDED, BUT MONEY IS

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¶2. (C) Sunday Okemini, Second Secretary at the Nigerian embassy, told poloff July 2 that once the trafficked Nigerians arrive in Algeria, the traffickers confiscate their passports and travel documents for reuse. They then try to extort money from friends and relatives of the victims, with DHL the preferred courier for money transfers. If money is forthcoming, the individuals are released to continue their journey, typically on their own. If money is not forthcoming, Okemini said, trafficked individuals may be held indefinitely or killed. One woman with whom Okemini had spoken said she was kept confined for two years with no access to sunlight.

¶3. (C) Tamanrasset is the first town of any size in the Sahara north of Algeria's southern border. Once there, trafficked Nigerians are either handed over to an "Arab man" who takes them west to Morocco, or they are transported to Maghnia, near the Mediterranean coast in northwest Algeria about 10 kilometers from the Moroccan frontier. Morocco-bound trafficked individuals go by road, with the "Arab man" having paid off Algerian authorities in advance to avoid problems. (Note: Although the Algeria-Morocco border has technically been closed for most of the last 40 years, vehicle traffic passes fairly easily across the frontier at several points, including Maghnia. End note.)

¶4. (C) Okemini said individuals not transported directly to Morocco are often brought by a different Nigerian trafficker

to an illegal immigrant camp outside of Maghnia. According to Okemini, the Maghnia camp has water, electricity, and a population of illegal migrants from many countries, including Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Ghana. Okemini said the camp exists with the full knowledge of the Algerian government, including nearby gendarmes. (Note: Press reports indicate the GOA occasionally deports people from the camp. End note.) He chuckled and described the camp's inhabitants as a cynical version of the African Union. Okemini said he occasionally talks to the person who controls the Nigerian faction, which numbers at least 500.

THE CHALLENGE OF SORTING THINGS OUT

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¶5. (C) Okemini confirmed that the main through-points for illegal immigrants in Algeria are Tamanrasset, Adrar and Maghnia. He said the Nigerian embassy was unaware of the exact number of illegal Nigerians in Algeria, but estimated that 2000 pass through the country every year. He added the GOA was not forthcoming with information and cooperation despite repeated requests. He also told poloff many illegal immigrants initially say they are Malians, and only identify themselves as Nigerians if they have problems with the legal system.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Okemini's information confirmed what we have heard anecdotally and piecemeal over the past year. There is a certain irony that the Nigerians, not known for their government transparency, have frustrations with the Algerians in terms of information and cooperation on TIP-related issues.  
DAUGHTON